

Talking Points for CALFED Public Hearings

The Family Center, Huntington Park, California

August 24, 1999

My name is Bill Hartge, and I am vice president of the Municipal Water District of Orange County, a member agency of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. As such, we provide water to 1.8 million Orange County residents and businesses through 27 cities and water districts.

I am speaking tonight on behalf of my district and as the chairman of the Water Advisory Committee of Orange County, which represents the interests of all of the public and private water providers in the county.

The Delta is a critical source of drinking water for 2/3rds of all Californians. As such, we have approached the CALFED process based on the promise by CALFED that it would:

- ☐ Work to improve source water quality to allow water suppliers to meet state and federal standards,
- ☐ That it would ensure a reliable water supply, and
- ☐ That it would do all this in an environmentally responsible manner.

We believe this is the appropriate course for CALFED, and that CALFED is trying to do just that. Nevertheless, the programmatic CALFED Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (PEIS/EIR) does nothing more than promise to try to achieve what we had been led to believe it would succeed in accomplishing. In some cases, it appears it actually will make things worse before giving any consideration to making them better.

A case in point: The proposed restoration of wetlands through the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program may increase the amount of total organic carbon at drinking water intakes, increasing the potential to form disinfection by-products. Changing channel flows and increasing the amount of tidal waters exchanged with the estuary may increase the amount of bromide in Delta waters, significantly increasing formation of disinfection by-products.

In addition, the CALFED Water Quality Program actions are said to probably have minimal affect on the levels of bromide to the State Water Project. Thus, on one hand, the ERP will degrade drinking water supplies and on the other hand, the water quality program does not include actions to mitigate ERP actions. This appears to mean that Southern Californians should expect degraded water quality from the Delta, versus what they receive today, during Stage 1 and beyond.

It appears that CALFED is breaking its solution principal that says its preferred solution will "result in no significant redirected impacts." CALFED must change its approach to the Ecosystem Restoration Program in this regard or clearly define its approach to mitigating these redirected impacts to drinking water supplies.

We will submit formal technical and legal analyses in writing in time to comply with your Sept. 23 deadline. I want to stress, however, the water quality points that we believe strongly must be included in the final product: In the CALFED plan and in the PEIS/EIR prior to the Record of Decision.

The water quality requirements of Orange County must be ensured:

- We need a commitment that CALFED will ensure the ability of local water providers to protect public health by meeting anticipated more stringent regulations on disinfection by-product and pathogens to protect public health either through water quality improvements in Delta water supplies, or through a cost effective combination of alternative source waters, source improvement, and treatment facilities.
- We need a commitment that CALFED will deliver water quality that meets 150 milligrams per liter total dissolved solids in order to enhance recycling in Southern California, and to promote and expand existing conjunctive use programs.
- We need a commitment to establish a Water Quality Account, including state and federal funding sources, to implement water quality improvement projects for salinity management and public health requirements.

These commitments are not Orange County's "wish list." Rather, they are necessary elements of the Framework Agreement – the fundamental document that created the CALFED program.

The state and federal agencies that executed the Framework Agreement agreed that the alternative solutions will address water quality and effective planning and operation of water export systems in addition to protections for the Bay-Delta estuary and maintenance of Delta levees and channels.

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